

Central Intelligence Agency



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Mid East - Leb

## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

25 August 1983

LEBANON: After Gemayel?

Summary

*President Gemayel's domestic position continues to deteriorate as Lebanon's factional leaders concentrate on protecting their own groups' interests. Gemayel is opposed not only by Druze and Muslim leaders, but also by several commanders of the Phalange-dominated Lebanese Forces militia. We believe Gemayel is unlikely to achieve a national reconciliation.*

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*If, as appears likely, serious factional fighting erupts after the Israeli pullback, Gemayel may be forced out of office or be the target of assassins. Lebanese Forces commanders probably have the strongest incentive to eliminate the President, particularly if he attempts a compromise with Muslim and Druze leaders.*

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*Government authority in Beirut during a post-Gemayel period most likely would have to cope with widespread factional violence. The Lebanese Forces would attempt to expand their areas of control in the city, provoking a strong Muslim response. Muslim militias would resist Lebanese Army attempts to maintain order. Sustained violence probably would split the Army along confessional lines.*

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*Syria and Israel would be reluctant to get involved*

*This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] of the Levant Branch, Arab-Israeli Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Information as of 24 August 1983 was used in preparation of this paper. Comments and queries are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, [redacted]*

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directly in renewed factional fighting, but both countries, in our view, would attempt to prevent defeats of their Lebanese surrogates. The two countries would be most protective of their interests in the Shuf, and the Syrians and Israelis would continue to compete for influence with Druze leader Walid Junblatt. [REDACTED]

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The constitution requires that the National Assembly meet immediately to choose a new president, but it is our judgment that the Assembly election could be blocked indefinitely. In the less likely event that the Army could over time retain its cohesion and contain urban violence, Army Commander Tannous could emerge as a compromise choice for the presidency. [REDACTED]

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A caretaker or successor government would probably immediately seek expansion of the Multinational Peacekeeping Force. A quick MNF response might suppress factional violence, but the peacekeeping force would suffer significant casualties. In any case, many Lebanese leaders probably would blame the United States for the collapse of central government authority. [REDACTED]

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President Amin Gemayel currently confronts the most serious crisis of his one-year-old presidency. The protracted stalemate in negotiations on troop withdrawal has exhausted the patience of Lebanon's sectarian leaders, who had lent Gemayel their support in the expectation that he would succeed in negotiating a withdrawal of all foreign troops. Now that such an agreement appears unlikely, Lebanese politicians are concentrating on protecting their groups' parochial interests and are again advancing their demands for fundamental political reforms, especially the restructuring of Lebanon's unwritten National Pact that favors the Maronite Christians over the country's Muslim majority. [REDACTED]

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Given the growing perception among Muslims and Druze that Gemayel is both ineffectual and a proponent of Maronite hegemony, we believe that the imminent Israeli pullback from the Shuf and Alayh districts southeast of Beirut will prompt Christian-Druze fighting in the mountains, which may spread to the capital. Sectarian leaders are now increasing their pressure on the central government in hopes of wresting political concessions. [REDACTED]

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Druze leader Walid Junblatt--backed by Syria--routinely orders his forces to shell Army positions, the Christian suburbs of East Beirut, and occasionally the airport. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Muslims are [REDACTED]  
rearming and reorganizing their militias. [REDACTED]

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The leadership of the Phalange-dominated Christian Lebanese Forces believes any government attempt to address seriously Muslim and Druze political demands will result in a diminution of Christian power. [redacted] several militia leaders are embittered toward Gemayel, who--in part because of his ties to veteran Phalange Party members--has thwarted the militia commanders' attempts to gain greater influence over the Phalange Party. [redacted]

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Extremist Lebanese Forces leaders such as Samir Ja'ja are emboldened in their opposition to the President by Gemayel's father Pierre, head of the Phalange Party. [redacted]

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[redacted] In our view, the elder Gemayel--intent on preserving his dream of a Christian Lebanon--probably supports Lebanese Forces attempts to reestablish gradually their quasi-governmental authority in East Beirut. [redacted]

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President Gemayel, in our estimation, has little room for maneuver among these competing groups. He cannot offer Muslims and Druze meaningful concessions without incurring the wrath of the Lebanese Forces. He cannot appease Christian militia commanders without encouraging Muslims and Druze to break completely with the government. The Israeli withdrawal from the Shuf and Alayh districts, which could now occur at any time and with little advance notice, will test Gemayel's ability merely to retain government control over greater Beirut. The extension of effective government authority to the vacated areas is very questionable. [redacted]

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#### Gemayel's Removal

Given the increasingly desperate position of the central government, a possibility now exists that President Gemayel will resign, be forced out of office, or be assassinated. We believe that Gemayel's voluntary resignation is the least likely of these scenarios, but the President and close advisers [redacted] [redacted] have become increasingly despondent and frustrated by their predicament. [redacted]

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Political pressures, however, could force Gemayel out of office. Serious factional fighting in the Shuf and Alayh could spread to the greater Beirut area, particularly if Muslims and Druze perceive that the Lebanese Army favors the Christian forces. In such a situation, Muslims and Druze might demand that Gemayel resign in favor of a more neutral president. Lebanon's veteran political leaders might support such a move in hopes of salvaging some vestige of central government authority. [redacted]

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[REDACTED]

In our view, the most likely manner in which Gemayel will be removed from office is assassination. A number of extremist Lebanese groups could choose to kill Gemayel. [REDACTED]

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Militant Lebanese Forces commanders may have the strongest incentive to eliminate the President. Gemayel has made a formidable enemy in Samir Ja'ja, [REDACTED] who, in our view, wants to supplant the Gemayel family's leadership of the Phalange Party. [REDACTED]

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An assassination attempt could be prompted by a decision on Gemayel's part to compromise with Muslim and Druze leaders. Extremist Christian commanders recognize that Gemayel's death could throw Lebanon into general chaos, but, in our judgment, they believe that an embattled Christian ministate is preferable to sharing power with the Muslims. [REDACTED]

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If the Lebanese Forces moved against Gemayel, Christian militia commanders would attempt to consolidate quickly their control over much of the Beirut area. This would involve reappearing in force in East Beirut and probably also setting up positions in West Beirut. The Lebanese Forces might seek direct confrontations with Muslim militias in West Beirut, justifying their actions by incriminating Muslims in Gemayel's death. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Gemayel's death almost certainly would galvanize Muslim militias into action. If factional violence were left unchecked, we believe that the most likely outcome would be a redivision of Beirut into warring Muslim and Christian zones. The Lebanese Forces, however, would attempt to expand their control over all of Beirut. [REDACTED]

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#### Succession Under the Constitution

According to the Lebanese constitution, if the presidency becomes vacant, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet assume control of the government until a new president is elected. In our estimation, one of Prime Minister Wazzan's first acts would be to ask the Multinational Peacekeeping Force contingents to expand their presence in Beirut to forestall serious civil disorders and to prevent private militias from assuming control over large sections of the city. We believe the MNF would suffer significant casualties if it expanded its role. Radical Muslims would see the MNF as protecting Christian interests, particularly if the force did not also deploy in East Beirut. [REDACTED]

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The constitution requires the National Assembly to meet "immediately and of its own accord to elect a new President." A presidential candidate does not have to be an Assembly member. Two-thirds of the Assembly's 91 living members--61 deputies--

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would have to meet to achieve the quorum necessary for a presidential election. During the first ballot, a winning candidate would need 61 votes; in subsequent voting only a simple majority--46 votes--is necessary. The Assembly is to meet as long as necessary to elect a new president. [REDACTED]

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Based on Lebanon's past troubled experience with this system, we believe that the voting for the new president could be a lengthy and difficult process. Whether or not the Lebanese Forces were directly responsible for Gemayel's departure, they and Pierre Gemayel would insist on a pro-Phalange president. The elder Gemayel would, in our view, be the probable Phalange candidate. Given the heightened factional tensions, however, Muslims, Druze, and non-Phalange Christians would lobby for a more neutral Christian politician. Unlike the elections last year, during which Bashir and Amin Gemayel were chosen, we believe Lebanese politicians would be unwilling to repress their sectarian interests to support a Phalangist president. Countering this, however, is the fact that non-Phalangist Christian factions are now in a weaker position, militarily and politically, than at any previous point in Lebanon's history. [REDACTED]

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In our judgment, Syria is likely to have greater influence in new elections than it did in 1982. Deputies representing Syrian-occupied territory, combined with other Muslims, Druze, and non-Phalangist Christian representatives, could theoretically give Syria enough votes to orchestrate the election of its preferred candidate on the second ballot. There are several non-Phalangists, many belonging to the Independent Maronite Bloc, who could serve as neutral Christian candidates. [REDACTED]

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The Syrians might be willing to back Raymond Edde, a veteran Christian politician who has lived in Paris for the last six years. Edde, who has a reputation in Lebanon for being independent and tough-minded, has support among various factions in the Assembly. Although he opposes the Syrian occupation, he also condemns the activities of the Lebanese Forces, and Damascus might view him as the most electable candidate. [REDACTED]

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The Phalange, in our view, would not support Edde or any pro-Syrian Christian. According to US Embassy estimates, the Phalange can count on 25 to 30 votes in the Assembly, thus falling one vote short of preventing a quorum. If the Phalangists failed to woo additional votes, the Lebanese Forces would probably seek to stop the elections by forcibly preventing the convening of a quorum. The Lebanese Forces could kidnap opposition deputies or physically prevent the Assembly from convening by attacking the meeting place. In addition, the Israelis, who would oppose a pro-Syrian president, might prevent deputies from southern Lebanon from traveling to Beirut to vote in the elections. [REDACTED]

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Presidential elections could thus be blocked indefinitely.

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[REDACTED]

To break the stalemate, Lebanese politicians might attempt to draft a Christian technocrat with no known political affiliation to serve as president. In addition, according to US Embassy reporting, some Lebanese politicians, including Assembly speaker Assad, may believe that an election can be held without the two-thirds quorum, but there is no precedent for this practice. [REDACTED]

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If no president is elected, the Council of Ministers, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, could take over executive functions indefinitely. The Phalange and Lebanese Forces, in our judgment, probably would not accept a de facto Muslim government. Instead they would concentrate on solidifying control of East Beirut and the traditional Christian heartland, bringing Lebanon closer to de jure partition. [REDACTED]

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If the central government collapsed and the country slid toward civil war and partition, Lebanese politicians would increasingly blame the United States. According to US Embassy reporting, many Lebanese are already criticizing the US role and faulting Washington's inability to achieve a complete troop withdrawal. [REDACTED]

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#### A Tenuous Truce

Army Commander Tannous may be the one Lebanese official who could keep the government intact if Gemayel is removed from the presidency. Tannous is a Maronite but not a Phalangist; during the civil war years he fought with the Christian militias. Since his appointment last December, Tannous has worked hard to create a unified Army and assuage Muslim fears of a pro-Christian military. [REDACTED]

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We believe Tannous may have presidential ambitions, but his ability to play a role in the post-Gemayel period depends upon the performance of the Army--his most significant power base. It is our judgment that the Lebanese Army will hold together initially in the face of Druze and Lebanese Forces harassment. A lengthy conflict in the Shuf and Alayh, however, or increasing violence in the Beirut area would threaten to split the Army along confessional lines. [REDACTED]

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If Gemayel is assassinated, Tannous probably will move quickly to increase the Lebanese Army presence in Beirut. We believe Tannous will try to keep rival militias apart rather than attempt to challenge or disarm any one group. Nevertheless, Muslim militias, particularly the Shia Amal, may resist Army moves into West Beirut. The Muslim reaction may hinge on how successful the Army is in preventing Lebanese Forces encroachment into West Beirut and on whether Tannous uses the Army with equal vigor to control Christian areas. [REDACTED]

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In our estimation, Tannous could emerge as a compromise

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choice for president as long as the Army maintains its integrity and contains urban violence within reasonable levels. Although Damascus probably would oppose the Army commander, many Muslim and Druze politicians not under direct Syrian control might support Tannous. Initially the Army commander might also prove acceptable to the Lebanese Forces, but to win their support, in our view, he would have to give the Christian militia considerable freedom of action in East Beirut and the Maronite heartland. [REDACTED]

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If the Army collapses under the weight of factional fighting, Tannous probably will continue to lead a rump Christian force. This Christian Army almost certainly would join Lebanese Forces efforts to protect Christian areas against Muslim or Syrian attack. [REDACTED]

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### Coup Potential

Tannous could opt to lead a military coup. We do not believe this is likely, however, because he does not yet appear to have enough confidence in his Army or in the extent of his political support to make such a move. If he did assume power, however, Tannous might eventually challenge the private militias by attempting to confiscate their heavy weapons. In our assessment, a unified Lebanese Army--were it possible to field one--could defeat the private militias, but not without a prolonged, divisive conflict. [REDACTED]

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The Lebanese Forces could also attempt to gain control of the government by force. Before making such a move, Christian commanders, in our view, would seek the support of General Tannous. If the Lebanese Forces could not reach an accommodation with Tannous, they would then probably attempt to win the backing of Christian Army officers. [REDACTED]

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### The Syrian and Israeli Responses

The Syrian Government's main objective in the post-Gemayel period would be to prevent the election of another Phalange president. If no candidate acceptable to Damascus emerged or if the elections were deadlocked, Syria might attempt to sponsor a new political compromise through its surrogates in the National Salvation Front, probably consisting of a new formula for confessional power-sharing. If attempts at political resolution failed, Syria probably would not resist Christian efforts to establish a minstate limited to East Beirut and the traditional Christian heartland. [REDACTED] the Syrians are satisfied with a prolonged de facto partition of Lebanon, and they believe that a Christian minstate would eventually have to make peace with Damascus. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

We do not believe Syria wants renewed civil war because of the risk that Syrian and Israeli forces would be drawn into the conflict. Nonetheless, Muslim or Druze defeats by the Lebanese Forces would, in our view, elicit an aggressive response. The Syrian Army would shell Christian areas to defend its Muslim and Druze allies and perhaps even commit Syrian "volunteers" to the fighting, particularly in the Shuf and Alayh districts. If Muslim sections of West Beirut were in danger of being overrun by the Lebanese Forces, Muslim leaders probably would ask for Syrian assistance. We believe Damascus would be very reluctant to reenter Beirut militarily; Syria instead might choose to attack Christian villages along the periphery of the Christian heartland to draw the Lebanese Forces away from Beirut. [REDACTED]

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Israel--given the public's uneasiness with the prolonged Army occupation of Lebanon--would be reluctant to intervene in any of the internal fighting. If the Syrian Army attempted to reenter Beirut, however, or if the Christian forces were threatened with massive defeats, Prime Minister Begin probably would employ the Israel Defense Force to prevent a Syrian-backed defeat of the Christians. The Israelis, we believe, would want to avoid returning to the Beirut area, and they would hope that surgical strikes against Syrian units elsewhere in Lebanon would force Damascus to reconsider its policies. [REDACTED]

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A Syrian move into the Shuf and Alayh districts would also elicit an Israeli military response. In the post-Gemayel period, the Syrians and Israelis would be competing against each other for influence with the Druze, and Junblatt would be likely to continue to play each party against the other. [REDACTED]

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### The National Pact

At the time of independence in 1943, Lebanese leaders formulated a National Pact to guarantee the sectarian rights within the diverse population of Lebanon. An unwritten agreement, the Pact allocates political and administrative offices equitably among the recognized confessional groups according to the percentage of each in the total Lebanese population. Using the 1932 census as a base (none has been taken since then), the Presidency traditionally goes to a Maronite Christian, the prime ministership to a Sunni Muslim and the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies to a Shia Muslim. The 99 seats of the Chamber are also allocated proportionately among the religious communities.